

December 21, 2001

TO: Environmental Health Managers **GMP #115**
District Health Directors
VPI-SU Soil Scientists
Office of Environmental Health Services Staff
Authorized Onsite Soil Evaluators

FROM: Donald J. Alexander, Director
Division of Onsite Sewage and Water Services

SUBJECT: Onsite Evaluation and Design Quality Assurance and Training

After two and one half years of experience with the Authorized Onsite Soil Evaluator (AOSE) program, and apparently far more successes than failures, there are several identifiable program needs. Some of these will be addressed in the forthcoming *AOSE Regulations*. One that will not be addressed in the regulations is the need for an impartial method of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of our site evaluation and design programs in both the public and private sectors. Attached is a process for evaluating both public and private sector site evaluations and designs that I plan to implement starting the first quarter of 2002 and continue on a quarterly basis.

The purpose of this evaluation tool is to identify both strengths and weaknesses in the AOSE and Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) site evaluations and designs. This so the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and other interested parties can target training, make program adjustments and fix or strengthen the weaknesses and keep or optimize the parts that are working well. The evaluation tool is intended to render a fair, impartial, and consistent evaluation of both public and private sector site evaluators. The results of the process will be shared with EH managers and AOSEs and will be used to better focus VDH training, assist in recognizing other AOSE as well as VDH training opportunities. The results will be reported anonymously and will not be used as an enforcement tool.

The evaluation process is attached for your review. The purpose of the process is to initiate a program to assure the ongoing improvement of both public and private sector site evaluations and designs. As a side benefit, I hope the process will begin to instill mutual trust and confidence which

will build over time. I also expect the time spent will prove to be educational for all parties. Any suggestions you may have to further these goals are encouraged. Initial comments should be received by January 31, 2002.

Finally, everyone's participation is necessary for this process to work. Initially, participation may seem limited to a few individuals for a few days. However, the breadth of participation and the scope of commitment may be greater than initially anticipated. The document indicates there will be four review teams working each quarter. The review teams are intended to be made up of an AOSE, an EHS and a Virginia Tech soil consultant and I expect their work will take 2.5 to 3 days per quarter. My intention is to invite AOSEs and EHSs to participate as team members and to change the makeup of the review teams quarterly.